

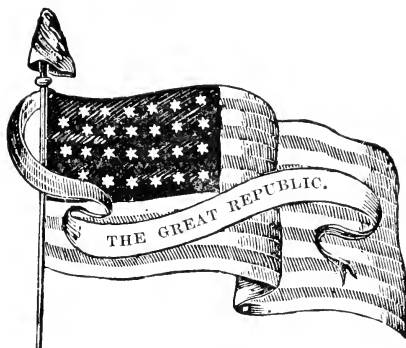
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THE



"GREAT REPUBLIC."

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PRICE TEN CENTS.

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NOTES

FROM THE LOG-BOOK OF THE SHIP

"GREAT REPUBLIC."

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CHAPTER I.

THE following facts are collated from a roll of MSS., a friend informs us he picked up on the North Carolina shore, somewhere near Cape Hatteras. The sheets, like Mr. F. Cooper's friend Long Tom Coffin, bear unmistakable signs of having been at sea, and are so badly stained with salt water as to be almost illegible. They appear to be a portion of the diary of a passenger in a vessel called the *Great Republic*. As we said before, the MSS. is not only badly mutilated by the action of the salt water, but is very incomplete, rendering it difficult to obtain a connected narrative. The writer, though evidently not a nautical man, appears to have been a pretty close observer of passing events on board, and to be not altogether satisfied with the manner in which the ship was worked, as he thought that she was often run more in the interest of

the crews than either the passengers or owners: and that the number of officers and crew was out of all proportion to the work performed or required.

The *Great Republic* appears to have been an armed merchantman, or privateer, of forty guns, and, when put upon the stocks, to have been only intended as a slow-going sailing vessel, and was then run in the interest of a foreign firm called Anglo, Welsh & Scott, (a fourth partner, named Patrick, had a slight interest in the working expenses and losses of the firm), who had, or were supposed to have had, a "bottomry bond" on her, and who very much overcharged the ship's company for provisions. The passengers, however, had determined to revolutionize things, and, watching their opportunity, when the members of the firm were entangled in an Admiralty suit with the owners of a ship called the *Louis Bourbon*, had mutinied, and turned the guns on the crew, who, after many hotly-contested engagements, were compelled to quit the ship, and mighty glad they were to go, the *Republic's* passengers having developed a fighting capacity which greatly astonished the Johnnybulls (as the crew and officers were called) who had been used to having everything their own way at sea. The passengers had no sooner obtained possession of the ship than they employed a shipwright, named Jefferson, to put boilers into her, and who built them on what he called the Constitution pattern, and which were intended to be upright, but had got a decided list to leeward. From the dimensions given in the MSS. she appears to have been the largest, if not the most powerful ship afloat. Trusting in the strength of her boilers, they frequently lashed down the safety-valve, and ran her at a speed which seriously endangered the safety of those on board, especially as the frequent additions to her hull, and her somewhat unwieldly size made her very slow at answering her helm.

She originally sailed from the City of Brotherly Love, but where she is likely to bring up, judging from the small stock of home commodity now on board, the writer appears afraid to say.

The crew, instead of being hired in the usual way by the owners or agents, were chosen by the passengers—the officers for the cruise, which was generally of four years' duration, and the foremast-hands, top-men, engineers, &c., just so long as they kept the ropes running smoothly, and the machinery well lubricated, on which purpose they expended larger quantities of palm oil than any other ship's crew were known to have done. Not content with giving the choosing power to those who possessed some little nautical knowledge, every adult male passenger on board was allowed his say in the choice of officers, many of whom were totally unable even to sign their names to the list when they joined the ship, at a port called Castle Garden, and it was generally noticed that those passengers who had least freight or baggage on board, made the most noise, and had the most to say, when the ship was being commissioned.

The crew and passengers of the *Republic* were probably the most motley assemblage ever gathered in one vessel, or under one flag, and were from all parts of the earth, a large proportion from the isle of Pat-moss, who had volunteered during different cruises, and who were principally conspicuous at the time the officers were being elected, and from their evident desire to bestow and hold the commissions amongst themselves, but this the passengers generally tolerated, partially from the well-known fact of their never having been able to get "abaft the foremast" in their own ship.

In addition to the usual complement of officers, there was what was called a Supreme Committee of Navigation (of from 8 to 7), whose duty it was to consult the chart, and caution the commodore and his officers when they were carrying too much steam in the boilers, or sailing too near the wind.

The crew was divided into two watches, and were called the Republican watch and the Democratic watch; and a pretty "high old time" they generally kept of it, for their work was done in a very second-hand manner, and they certainly were not very particular to "tick-off" the

quantity of ship's stores and provisions delivered by the contractors and agents. However, they are likely to come out a-head in the long run, for, if they did very little watching, they generally got credit for a vast amount of preying.

The Quartermasters and Quartermasters' mates were selected from both watches, and used to meet in the pilot-house four times during a cruise, and were allowed to advise with the Commodore and his officers on all matters connected with the ship's course. Their pay was big, especially as "blowing" the fog-horn was the only duty most of them were fit for, but this did not satisfy them, and they were pretty generally suspected of assisting any of the passengers who had designs against the ship's pay chest, and being, like Mr. B. Harte's "Heathen Chinees," fond of ways that were slippery, they traded off their nautical influence for palm oil. These little arrangements were generally termed "jobs," and were usually negotiated in the companion way. Their motto was "IN GOD WE TRUST," but the writer hints at good reasons for supposing that the compliment was by no means returned, certainly not by their fellow men, who were usually willing to trust them just as far as they could see them.

The manuscript gives but brief mention of the earlier cruises of the ship, during one of which she came into collision with a ship fitted out by her former owners (A. W. & S.) and, after capturing many of her small boats and a lot of her marines (down in the Gulf of Mexico), succeeded in beating her off in a very handsome manner.

She also had a sharp engagement with the *Bourbon*, but this resulted in about a draw. Both parties being glad to haul off and repair damages. She made several uneventful cruises after this, all, or nearly all of which were quiet and profitable.

CHAPTER II.

THE boats' crews were allowed to make their own rules, and the crew of one of them, called the "Kansas," came near making a pretty mess of it, and in the end

did breed a tremendous mutiny on board. The rumpus came about in this way. The coal trimmers were shipped under "bonds," to the cavaliers (or horse-marines), who drew their pay, and most terribly ill-used them, trading off their wives and children in any port at which they chanced to call. The horse-marines wanted to ship a quantity of their coal-trimmers on the "Kansas," to which the crew objected. This occurred first about the time that the ship was to be re-commissioned, and was one of the features of the canvass amongst the crew. The horse-marines objected to the new Commodore, threw up their commissions, and took possession of the ship forward of the pilot-house. They even went so far as to fire over the passengers' heads at the ship's colors, which they called the "Grid-iron." Many of them declared they would never cut their hair or change their chew of tobacco until they had the ship in their own possession. For a time it looked as if they were likely to have things their own way, for the ships' marines, like a policeman when a street fight is in progress, were not to be found when wanted, having been ordered on duty in the "tops," and other out of the way places in the ship, having been sent by the "fighting captain," who had been in sympathy with the mutineers, and eventually joined them. In addition to this, the mutineers had removed the small arms from the chest and secreted them in the fore part of the ship.

In the first free fight the mutineers were eminently successful, and it was thought that they would obtain control of the machinery. They were also successful in capturing a large number of the small boats which had been cruising round the ship, and watching the ports. This mischief was principally performed by the use of a foreign-built boat, the *Alla Blam 'er*, which they purchased from the Jonnybulls, who always preferred supplying the combatants with ammunition and weapons to taking a hand in the fight.

It was thought on all sides that the mutiny might have been quelled much sooner had the crew wished to do so, but that the agony was prolonged through a conspiracy

between the Quartermasters and some of the passengers—the former agreeing to run the ship before the wind, while some of the latter supplied the combatants with ammunition and provisions from their private stores, and took “bottomry” bonds on the ship, in payment.

However, after the rumpus had lasted for the whole of one cruise and part of another, it was eventually brought to a close, and such of the mutineers as did not jump overboard captured, by Uncle Sam Gee, who had from the first an idea that if he could only get them on the “line” he could beat them, which he did, when they were too weak and hungry to continue the fight. That he would ultimately get the better of the mutineers was never for a moment doubted by those who “knew the ropes,” but why he should want to “fight it out” on a line they could not understand, as his usual inability to perform on a “line” was proverbial.

CHAPTER III.

AS soon as the ship's company had quieted down, and she was put on the right tack, she was thoroughly overhauled, and many of her internal arrangements “reconstructed” (the coal-trimmers even having a voice in her management).

There never was such a ship as this for speaking-trumpets. Each of the prominent passengers and crew had his private trumpet, independent of the ship's trumpets (which were blown by the machine). One of these was blown by old Go West, and from its size and power was named the *Trumbone*, and was used to call up the Republican watch. and the *Two Hemispheres*, and the *Tempus*, both belonged to the Democratic watch. The chief use of these was to drown the voice of, and generally annoy any candidate for promotion on the ship's books who did not subscribe to their maintenance and belong to their ring or party. Another trumpet was owned by St. Ledger. He did not pay much attention to the ship's course, or pretended not to, but was particularly solicitous of the morals of the company generally. He was always willing to assist a

fellow-passenger whom he found in distress. The only charge that either the crew or passengers could trump up against him was that he was too deeply attached to U. S. Gee. There is no doubt that they had been on several longshore sprees together; but this did not prove that they entertained any designs against the peace and safety of the ship.

Now these men, especially old "Go West," had taken a great interest in the fate of the coal-trimmers, and having frequently told them that one man was as good as another (a doctrine they never could be persuaded to apply to the "pale-faces") they were very desirous of proving them so. They even went so far as to insist that they should mess with the cabin passengers, attend the amateur theatricals and concerts, which the passengers from time to time got up, and that they should be buried from the same grating.

This was tried, and the Quartermasters and their mates induced to make a by-law entitling the trimmers to the privileges, but it really had little effect. If they went in at one door they were usually cuffed out at another. Indeed, it was noticed that even the men who made most noise about what they termed the trimmers "civil rights," usually gave them a wide berth when they met them, and invariably passed "to windward."

Having secured their liberty to these men, it became necessary to make provision for the safety of their pay when it was drawn, and to this end some of the Republican watch employed one of the ship's carpenters to build a chest for them, which they labelled "Liberated Coal-Trimmer's Bank." This was built very much upon the pattern of children's savings banks, with a little hole cut in the top, through which to deposit the savings. The general features of the scheme, and the use of this hole were explained to the trimmers, and they were without much difficulty induced to deposit their pay therein, instead of leaving it in the hands of the ship's paymaster. But there was another and a bigger hole which was not explained to the parties most interested, and although it must have been at the bottom of the chest

they have never yet been able to discover exactly where it was, or who made it. Suffice it to say that when the chest was opened it was found empty, and the contents carefully removed. Where the funds went never could be clearly ascertained, but a passenger named Davy Jones was suspected of having it securely stowed away in his locker.

Indeed the whole scheme of re-adjusting the coal-trimmers seems to have been of little practical utility to either themselves or the ship's company, and only appears to have been useful as a handle for jobs. In fact they have rather depreciated in value—they used to be worth something, but now it is only their votes that will sell, and these are getting cheaper every day.

CHAPTER IV.

SHORTLY after this, the time came round for re-commissioning the ship, and Uncle Sam Gee was promoted from the captaincy of the marines to the commodore-ship. This post and its attendant honors appears to have been bestowed upon him more as a reward for past services, than from his general fitness for the position, or the expectation that he was capable of earning the increased pay. After events proved this to be the case, as he allowed his subordinates to plunder the ship to a frightful extent, and reduced them so low in the scale of seamanship that the passengers got thoroughly ashamed of them, and threatened to bring the whole Republican watch to court-martial, if not to disrate them altogether.

The ship had formerly been run on economical principles; but, under his commodoreship, the whole ship's company seemed to run riot with extravagance, and to indulge in all kinds of vulgar ostentation. Steerage passengers, who had been only too glad to work out part of their passage money, and to drink the ship's water, were now satisfied with nothing less than a cabin passage and the most expensive foreign wines. Both passengers and crew indulged an intense passion for jewelry, and especially for "rings." There were "rings" everywhere!

Everything connected with the ship was worked with rings. The passengers formed rings on the poop; the officers formed "rings" on the quarter deck, the quarter-masters formed them in the pilot-house, and even the fore-mast hands were in the business.

One of the principal ring-masters was a Boss Sheep-minder, who swindled the ship with a bogus contract for flooring the pilot-house.

Then, again, the Boatswain was discovered to be in league with the ship's chandler, and with purchasing stores and tackle at three times their value and dividing profits with them.

Another worthy amongst the crew was Ben Deadeye, but to which watch he belonged it was a hard matter to tell. In fact, the only two watches he ever kept were a watch over his own interests and an old silver one which he was supposed to have found when serving in the capacity of *butler*. He wanted several times to command one of the boats, but the crew and passengers could not be persuaded to elect him, as, besides his general character for trickiness, his discharge from a former vessel was not so clean as it might have been, a quantity of plate having been missed from the *Louisa and Hannah*, a West India trader of which he was for some time head cook and bottle-washer, owing to which he had to be content with the position of quartermasters' mate.

Another of the quartermasters had been shipped under the name of James B. Lane, who spent most of his time when not on duty in washing dirty linen and gory shirts. These he hung out from the window of his state-room (which was on the Maine deck), whenever one of the horse-marines or late mutineers passed. His watch below was rendered uncomfortable, and his rest broken, by the dread that B. Hill and Bob Graves, two unreconstructed mutineers, were trying to scuttle the ship or fire the magazine.

The ship was usually well supplied with grog, but a passenger having complained that his was watered a watch was set, and an assistant steward named B. A. B. Cock was found to have removed a bulkhead, and effected an entry

into the spirit-room. He was handed over to the custody of the master-at-arms, and ultimately dismissed the ship. This caused considerable ill-feeling on board, as the Commodore was always suspected of having had his stock of table wine replenished on this occasion.

One of the principal ring-pullers was a man named Boss, of whose antecedents little was known, but whose dialect gave rise to the suspicion that he was from the Tweed. His people probably had been Scotch free-booters, as he showed a marvellous capacity in that line, having pillaged the boat of everything moveable, and even obtained advances on her hull in every port at which the ship traded. He was put under arrest, but bribed the sentry, and jumped overboard and swam ashore at the island of Cuba. He was recaptured, however, and died while in irons.

The chaplain, Mr. H. Ward-Preacher, also got himself into an awful mess about this time, and it was only his previous good conduct record which saved him from being cashiered. One of the saloon passengers made complaint that he had made improper proposals to her in the ladies boudoir. The reverend seaman, was brought to court-martial, and a great deal of evidence tendered, both *pro* and *con*, particularly that of a mutual friend, and a young stewardess named Bessie. He however explained that he merely went down to hid a sea-gull's nest, which he had found in one of the "cross-trees," when a sudden lurch of the ship *tilted* him *on* the sofa upon which the lady was sitting, but that he "stepped down," and got "out" as quickly as possible. Whether this was correct or not is a matter between the chaplain and his Great Archbishop, but the yarn was ship-shape enough to "gull" the members of the court, who let him off with a verdict of "not proven."

During U. S. Gee's first cruise, and while the ship was off the Canadian coast, a number of Pat Riots and some of the Democratic watch, taking advantage of the sentry being below, stole one of the quarter boats, and went on shore to attend Finnigan's wake, and have a little jamboree, intending to request the inhabitants to "plase to

trid on the tail av their coats." The people of Canada did not, however, oblige them in this little particular, but they did the next best thing to it—they trod right *under* them, with a heaviness which rather astonished the wearers, and then handed them over to the police. Next morning, they were taken before an alderman, and as some of them were recognized as old offenders these were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. They supposed when they started on the spree that the Commodore would have sent a boat's crew ashore to demand their release, but in this they were very much mistaken, as the ship was only too glad to be without them for a term of years.

CHAPTER V.

IF they paid little attention to home affairs they kept a pretty sharp eye on the movements of foreign cruisers, and brought one or two of them to task for discourtesy shown them during the time the mutiny was in progress. They had a pretty sharp reckoning with an old bum-boat woman, Mother Britannia, who had taken advantage of the row on board to annoy her former customers in various mean, petty ways, especially by supplying the mutineers with arms and other contraband of war, which she contrived to slip in through the port-holes when the sentries were off guard. This course had not endeared her to either of the combatants, as it was prompted by no feelings of regard for either of them, but in order to procure the ship's stores of cotton-waste and tobacco, which the mutineers traded off with her for such articles as they required. They really gave the ship as much trouble as the mutineers themselves, for, as fast as the sentries dropped a shot through the bottom of one boat, and sank or hauled it on board, she had another ready. The officers determined to make her pay for this, and sent in a bill for the whole expenses of the fight. She evinced a desire to dodge the settlement of this matter, especially as they presented their modest bill when she was trying to tie up a bear *Russian* which she had previously

caught and tamed, but which had broken loose, and was likely to cause considerable trouble in her out-houses. The old lady had traded off her jack-knives, bandannas, and notions, etc., with the crew for so long a time that nearly all their warrants for back pay had been signed over to her, and the ship's company intimated that unless she did something in the way of settling the contra, or at least "acknowledged the corn," she would not be allowed to come on board and collect her bills from the crew, to say nothing of the chance of getting some of "her darned old bumboats blown out of the water." These arguments had the desired effect, and she promised to take the bill into "her favorable consideration," item by item, if they would only allow her time to muzzle and tie up the refractory bear. The matter was ultimately settled by the commodore of a South American ship, who was asked to settle the dispute, and who awarded about five per cent. of the amount originally claimed. They were satisfied, however, as they had left ample margin in their original bill for any contingency of this kind. Even after a large contra claim had been deducted, there was a large amount unclaimed in the ship's pay chest, which only served as a bone of contention amongst the crew; but the betting is about even amongst the passengers that in the end it will be divided between the Quartermasters. However, long years of trading had made the old lady pretty keen "on a trade," and she got the better of them in the next transaction, when she sold them a large bill of fish at about ten times its value; and the fish, although pretty well "salted," stank so abominably that the brokers who negotiated the business have smelt "fishy" ever since.

The *Republic* also gave a sharp intimation to a suspicious looking craft commanded by a Frenchman named Louis, who had already stolen one big ship and several small boats, to "sheer off," as he took advantage of the troubles of the crew to "board" and attempt to carry off a small coaster, the *Mericana*, which had anchored near her port bow. He seemed inclined to show fight at first, but when she fired a shot across his bows he

every rash word and petty breach of discipline as an act of open mutiny would suffice, when the time came, to protect its own majesty, though senseless agitators should raise the cry every time the ship fired a salute that the guns were

“BOOMING, BOOMING FOR GRANT!”

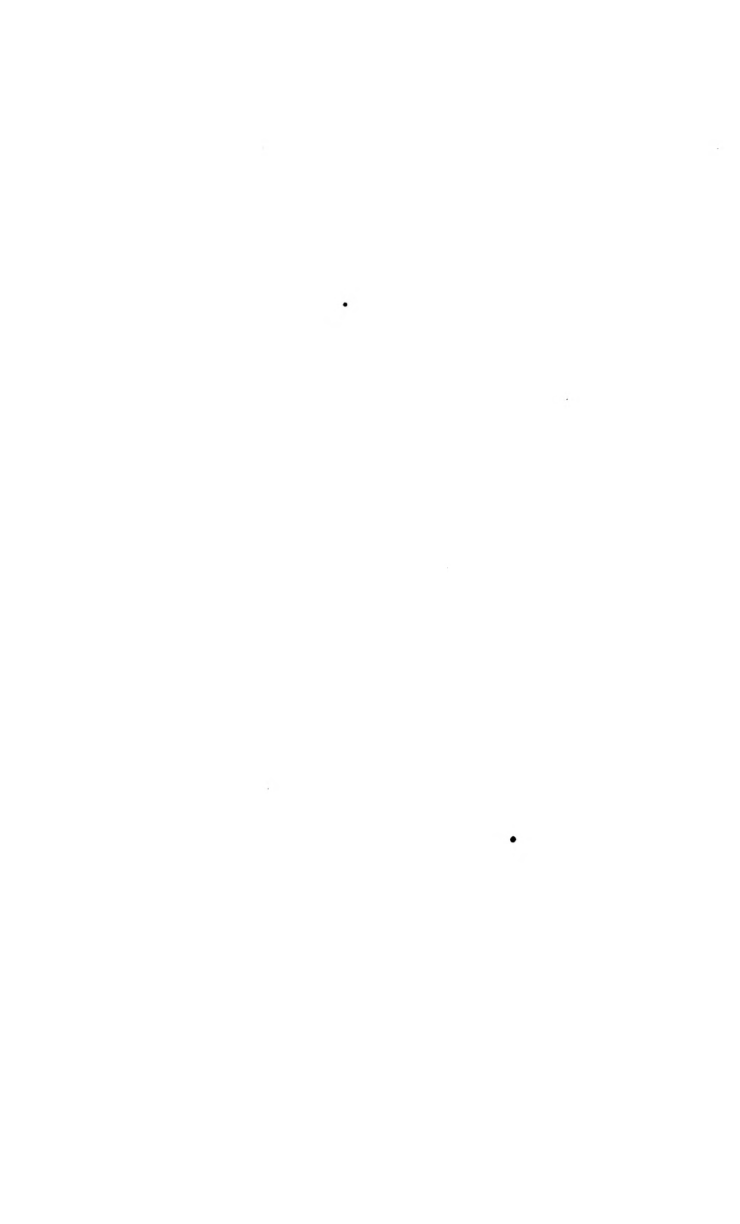
[*Avast, there.*]

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It is the rule to apologize for taking up the time and attention of the public at the beginning of a book, but the perpetrator of the foregoing pages prefers tendering his after the dose has been swallowed. If it has proved a failure, gentle reader, you may be comforted by the certainty that he regrets his temerity by this time just as heartily as you do, and will not again risk your censure. On the contrary, should it meet with your approval, he will probably be emboldened by impunity, and risk meeting you again on another “tack.”

Respectfully,

THE AUTHOR.



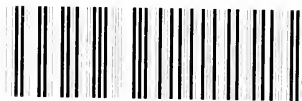


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